

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
27 August 1980

DETECTING NUCLEAR

THE SOVIET VIEW

*Second in a series of articles based on interviews
by Elizabeth Pond and Daniel Southerland*

By Elizabeth Pond
Staff correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

It takes two to tango. Will the other super-power play along with whatever course American planners finally settle on as the most likely way to avoid nuclear war?

Is the Soviet Union — in the sardonic hawk phraseology — really serious about nuclear détente? Is it — in the rhetorical counterquestion of the doves — really serious about surviving? Why should it — in the Russians' own formulation — conform to Western strategic concepts devised to shore up the stability of a world division of power that Moscow does not accept as legitimate?

The answers to these questions must remain a matter of conjecture. Soviet leaders explain little of their underlying premises and analysis. They regard nuclear strategy as secret. And they may never have evolved a coherent nuclear theory at all, beyond a patchwork of revised pre-nuclear maxims.

This dearth leaves outside observers grasping at clues from such oblique themes as Nikita Khrushchev's "noninevitability of war," Soviet "war fighting" nuclear capabilities, and the perceived degree of devastation in any all-out war. The divergent readings of these clues define one of the most fundamental splits between Western hawks and doves. Both sides can marshal batteries of quotations and statistics to support their contrary theses. Neither side can ever be proved right or wrong, short of the ultimate breakdown of deterrence in nuclear catastrophe.

There is, however, some initial agreement between hawk and dove:

The Soviet Union is no mirror image of the United States. It is an authoritarian state with an urge to expand its international influence, and it is untempered by any strong domestic political restraints. This drive is both historical (harking back to the czars) and ideological (heralding the

bated on the one hand by the Soviet inferiority complex toward the West and on the other by a pride in the Soviet Union's new global power. It is manifested in the Soviet refusal to endorse any status quo short of the total world victory of communism, and possibly also, in the recent Soviet arms buildup.

The global triumph of Soviet-led socialism is deemed historically inevitable in Moscow. But the Soviet Union still sees itself as charged with hastening the advent of the inevitable. The process is a dialectical one of struggle and antithesis which knows no lasting stability until that final, all-encompassing socialist victory.

This is a concept vastly different from the West's model of world pluralism, stability of the status quo, and the imperative of not upsetting the existing international order by force.

Until Khrushchev's time, this Soviet image of the world held wars to be inevitable. With the death of Joseph Stalin, the arrival of the cataclysmic nuclear age, and the emergence of the Soviet Union out of its old siege mentality, however, Khrushchev made the leap of declaring war with capitalist states no longer inevitable. The ultimate triumph of Soviet socialism remained assured, but the transition to it in individual countries could come through pacific means. And before the final socialist victory there could be an indefinite period of "peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems."

"Peaceful coexistence" thus became the foundation for Leonid Brezhnev's détente. And that, say Western hawks, is détente's fatal flaw.

From this point on, the hawk-dove consensus breaks down. Hawks make a "worst case" interpretation of Soviet intentions, military doctrine, force posture, and implications for the coming decade. Doves make a less dire interpretation. The opposing arguments run as follows:

The hawk version

Intentions

Soviet "peaceful coexistence" is only a temporary expedient. It is a soft-line ploy to help shift the world "correlation of forces" in favor of the self-proclaimed revolutionary that aims to